

United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary

*Keeping Families Together: The President's Executive Action on Immigration  
and the Need to Pass Comprehensive Reform*

Testimony of  
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Thank you Senator Hirono, Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, including Senator Dianne Feinstein from the great state of California. I appreciate this opportunity to provide my testimony on this important topic.

My name is Charlie Beck and I am the 56<sup>th</sup> Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department where I have spent forty years of my life serving the communities of this nation's second largest city. I am proud of the work we have accomplished in Los Angeles building trust with each of our communities. This has been accomplished as result of focused and effective outreach with stakeholders to identify and address concerns. Our efforts, whether through regular forum meetings involving myself and stakeholders from our diverse communities, or in the day-to-day interaction with an officer on the beat, have proven that local law enforcement can hold the trust of its communities. However, over the years, immigration policies and federal programs, such as Secure Communities, have posed challenges to the trust established between the police and undocumented immigrants who fear that any interaction with the police will result in their removal.

I am here today to speak to the important matter of immigration reform and President Obama's recent action entitled, *Keeping Families Together: The President's Executive Action on Immigration and the Need to Pass Comprehensive Reform*. I speak on behalf of the Los Angeles Police Department as this matter before the Committee and the Congress is of significant importance to public safety in my city as well as cities and communities across this great nation.

The President's Immigration Accountability Executive Action has many elements including specific actions designed to improve our border security, implementing a new Priority Enforcement Program (PEP) focused on national security threats and serious criminals, and creating deferred action mechanisms for certain undocumented immigrants. My brief remarks will focus on the last two – replacement of the Secure Communities program with the PEP, and mechanisms to establish deferred action mechanisms for certain undocumented immigrants. This would include young people who have been in the United States (U.S.) at least five years or parents of U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents who have been in the country for more than five years.

I am encouraged by the President's announcement of Administration's plan to replace the existing Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secure Communities program with the new Priority Enforcement Program. Over the course of the last five years, my Department has worked tirelessly with senior members of the DHS to refocus the enforcement priorities and other aspects of the Secure Communities program. Unfortunately, despite numerous changes to the program, many immigrants and others have lost faith in the program's stated purpose. Given the close association many made between the DHS Secure Communities program and local law enforcement, that loss of faith continues to undermine the immigrant community's relationship with the police working in their neighborhood.

With the announcement of the PEP and its stated focus, there exists the opportunity to repair the damage that has been done to local law enforcement's ability to garner the trust and cooperation of our immigrant communities.

However, to be clear, critical to the success of the newly announced PEP will be the makeup of those undocumented individuals identified by the DHS as the result of an arrest by local law enforcement and the PEP. Many in the immigrant community and elsewhere remain suspicious that the actual outcome of the new program will not substantially differ from the earlier Secure Communities program. Simply stated, too often in the past the DHS chose to focus on undocumented individuals who were recent entries charged with low-level criminal offenses. Should PEP focus its priority on those undocumented immigrants who pose a risk to national security or those charged with serious criminal offenses, there exists the opportunity to move forward in a much more productive manner.

Similarly, we support the President creating deferred action mechanisms for certain undocumented immigrants who pass a background check and young people who have been in the U.S. for at least five years and meet specific education and public safety criteria. For too long, these individuals have lived in the shadows of our communities fearing any misstep or involvement with law enforcement would result in their identification and removal. As members of this committee clearly understand, such circumstances pose significant risks. Many of these undocumented individuals have been and continue to be victimized and exploited by others in our community. Law enforcement is often unable to take action to stop this victimization as the undocumented immigrant and others fear stepping forward will result in their identification and removal. Additionally, criminal gangs and others intimidate whole communities with misinformation and innuendo that undocumented individuals who step forward to be a witness or testify will be deported and separated from their families. All of this creates and reinforces barriers to the trust needed between local law enforcement and our communities. The President's actions offer an opportunity for individuals who have proven themselves responsible to be given a deferred action and the ability to participate in their community without fear of being torn apart from their family.

In closing, I urge this committee to support intelligent, measured, and focused actions that allow local law enforcement to further build the trust of every member of the communities it serves. The President's actions, particularly to refocus the DHS on border security, national security threats and serious criminals, while also providing temporary relief for certain undocumented immigrants, are the kind of pragmatic steps needed at this critical time. The benefits gained for this group of undocumented immigrants will allow them to step out of the shadows and work with law enforcement for the safety of their communities and themselves. Thank you for the opportunity to address this with you. I will be pleased to respond in writing to any questions you may have.